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“The Relation of the Civil Government
to Christian Missions”

THE
RAMSDEN SERMON

FOR 1902

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

ON WHIT SUNDAY, MAY 18, 1902

BY THE

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HONORARY SECRETARY OF THE COLONIAL BISHOPRICS FUND
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THE FOUNDER OF THE RAMSDEN SERMON.

It is simply an act of justice to put on record a few facts connected with the endowment of this sermon.

In the year 1847, the necessary means for securing the annual delivery of a sermon, before the University of Oxford, in full term, at St. Mary's Church, on the subject of "*Church Extension over the Colonies and Dependencies of the British Empire*," were placed at the disposal of J. H. MARKLAND, Esq., of Bath, for seventeen years Treasurer, and throughout his whole life a warm supporter, of the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*. A similar endowment, at the suggestion of the same excellent Churchman, was subsequently obtained for the *University of Cambridge*.

The benevolent founder—Mrs. CHARLOTTE RAMSDEN—was a steady supporter of the same Society—an aged lady, "full of good works and alms-deeds," who added to them, as one of the last, the endowment of this sermon—naturally and appropriately called after her name, the "RAMSDEN Sermon."

S E R M O N .



My kingdom is not of this world.—ST. JOHN xviii. 36.

If they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another.—ST. MATTHEW, x. 23.

The servant of God must not strive.—2 TIMOTHY ii. 24.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.—1 ST. PETER ii. 13.

I DESIRE to handle in this sermon a subject which as much as any I know in the range of Mission problems needs prayer for "a right judgment in all things," in the words of our Whit-Sunday Collect—I refer to the relation of the Civil Government to Mission enterprise.

I do not propose to hold a brief either for the missionary or for the statesman, for no one can fail to see that each has a duty and a responsibility: they are not identical, and yet I venture to believe they may never be antagonistic. It is to be hoped they will be parallel influences, each giving due weight to the judgment of the other.

The utmost extent of my aspiration is that I may bring the conviction home to some that the subject begets a becoming humility both in the missionary and in the civil ruler.

Now it is obvious from the verses I have read you that it is a cardinal principle of the Faith of Christ that His kingdom is to grow by influence not by force, that it is leaven and not a sword. The Lord chose the long way, not the short one, when He willed to claim the heart and not merely the outward allegiance, and so accepted the conclusion that whole races should die in darkness, rather

than His people should use physical force ; thereby at the same time creating some mysteries which can only be solved in a future life.

Speaking on behalf of what I may call Anglo-Saxon Christianity I think it has for ever discarded appeals to the arm of the flesh in this Holy War. But I am not aware that Rome has banished this weapon from her armoury. Nor again am I sure that our national Christianity has reached the true conclusion by wholly noble means. Its deeper study of the Bible, the sturdy belief in the liberty of the individual, has aided the conclusion : but so also may have the shattering of undivided Christendom into many bodies at the Reformation, which made organised force difficult if not impossible.

We at least do not dream of asking the Civil Power to force the missionary upon any race. The problem is different. In this age the missionary finds the civil ruler in his path at times, at the door of a country, and is apt to reproach him. Is such opposition groundless and necessarily unchristian? How can the statesman differ from the missionary in his point of view even if he is a Christian?

I will put the statesman's case as fairly as I can. I think he would say to the missionary :—

“ I represent not you only, but the nation, which means a disunited Christianity, as well as a mass of those whose faith is decayed, and a very large number whose fires are smouldering even though they are called Christians. As a statesman, I cannot think only of Christ's command, as I would personally wish to do. If I did I should put £10,000,000 on the estimates for Missions. But as a ruler in the State I find I cannot foster Christianity so much as Christian civilisation. I find it possible to promote the second not exactly the first. Or put it thus—take the word ‘ Christianity.’ You as a missionary would lay the stress on the first two letters. So would I personally ; but as a statesman, I have to shift the emphasis to the last three. Your task is immeasurably simpler than mine. You think solely of One with Whom you are in personal relationship.

For His sake and at His command you are ready to go anywhere and to die at any time. I applaud your principle. In your place I would do the same. But, unfortunately, I am a civil administrator and responsible for the welfare of a country, which has highly complicated relations with other nations. You are longing, if need be, to lay down your life for Christ in a land not under our rule, and entreat us passionately to demand no redress if they kill you. I, on the contrary, know that were I to leave your death unavenged, England would lose prestige and new troubles would arise, ending possibly in a European war. Again, in another place your entry might light once more the fires of fanaticism, and lead to the expenditure of millions and, worse still, the deaths of thousands of our people. The fact is you can neither die nor live to yourself in these days when the world is becoming one vast whispering gallery.

“Have some sympathy for a man who is really a Christian, but who is officially a statesman, and who believes that God who opens doors shuts them also at times. Realise what it must be for me as a Christian to say to you, ‘Do not go just yet into that particular land.’ You are quite right to press your demand—press it earnestly—but credit me with equal sincerity if with a reluctant heart I refuse your request for the present. Do not look upon me as an enemy, but remember that in questions which are international the missionary’s voice is only one of two that must be heard at the Council Board, and God give us both a right judgment, making us parallel forces working for the same end.”

I have thus attempted to speak for the statesman who is at the same time a Christian. I would venture to go one step further. I doubt whether such a ruler would ever stand in the way of a perfectly wise missionary. It is the natural doubt on this point which makes a man hesitate who is responsible for the welfare of an empire and controls its forces. Not all missionaries have been wise. And further, there have been statesmen who have

been wrong in refusing entrance to the missionary, and the missionaries have been right.

Let me give you actual details from India, China, the South Seas, and Africa.

India affords perhaps the most instructive lesson. It will be seen that the Government has not always hindered Mission work, as some have supposed. For example, in 1698, the East India Company's Charter favoured Missions: a clause in it suggested that the Christian Faith should be imparted to the natives. Later on, the Government erected a statue to Schwartz in a church in Madras, which the natives were encouraged to view, and they caused a translation of the inscription, setting forth his missionary labours, to be made and circulated in India. They also for years carried the book-parcels of the S.P.C.K. for the missionaries in India free of charge, and when Kiernander went to Calcutta Clive placed a house at his disposal. The Marquis of Wellesley, when Governor-General, permitted a disputation at Government House between Moslems and Christians; but this alarmed the natives, and the attempt was not repeated. The attitude of our rulers however changed, and especially between the years 1793 and 1813, the Government was hostile, deporting missionaries, and checking all evangelisation in British India. It is also well known that a Commander-in-Chief of the forces in that country resigned his post rather than salute idols on a State occasion.

The great and permanent change which at length came over the attitude of the Government in India towards Missions is mainly due, under God, to the action of that famous roll of Punjab statesmen who were all fervent Christians, and asserted their right within reasonable bounds to display their faith, and their hearts' desire for India, to the natives. At the time of the Mutiny Lord Canning was indeed accused of being partly the cause of it by favouring Christianity; but an influential meeting of

Indian gentlemen (non-Christians) passed a resolution in Calcutta that nothing that Lord Canning had done could properly be reckoned as an interference with their religion or could give rise to rebellion.

A Benares Brahmin wrote at the same time the following striking testimony:—

“The people know that the Government is a Christian one; let it act openly as a true Christian; the people will never be disappointed, they will only admire it; you may have a thousand missionaries to preach and another thousand as masters of schools at the expense of the Government, or distribute a thousand Bibles at the hands of the Governor-General. The people will not murmur. But take care that you do not interfere with their caste, or force them to eat food cooked by another in the gaols, or thrust grease down their throats; I do not think that such acts have anything to do with the Christian religion.”

And, indeed, the Punjab statesmen aided Missions at Peshawar, the most fanatical city on the frontier, and wherever they were quartered, but they acted on Lawrence's dictum, “Christian things done in a Christian way, never alienate the heathen. It is when unchristian things are done in the name of Christianity that mischief is occasioned.” The result was that in the time of England's sorest need the most fanatical Moslems marched to Delhi under men who they knew would give all they possessed to make them Christians. It was such men who saved India: and it was our late Queen who brought together into one note the voices of the ruler and of the missionary in her Proclamation to the Indian people in 1858, the words being added to the document with her own hands. There is, we believe, perfect understanding in that great country between the two forces, although questions of vast importance remain unsolved.

The problem in China presents far greater difficulties. First, we are dealing with a foreign and an independent nation with an ancient civilisation; and secondly, we are

met there, on the part of another European Empire, by a policy opposed, or at least very different, to our own.

France, though acknowledging no God in her public documents, has consistently supported Missions as part of her foreign policy, and has even refused to give way to the Pope as protector of Roman Christians in many lands, claiming the right as a legitimate part of her political influence. In a missionary periodical published weekly in Lyons—*Missions Catholiques*—the generosity of Christians is constantly encouraged by impressing upon them that their contributions will not only assist the spread of Christianity but check the influence of England. Large grants were made by the Government to Cardinal Lavignerie because of his political influence in Tunis; and the Legion of Honour was given to Monsieur Casalis, a French Protestant missionary, for extending the influence of France in Basutoland, which it is well known is an integral part of the British dominions.

In China, the steady pressure of the French Legation procured at length for Roman Bishops the rank of a Chinese Governor, with authority to wear the button of honour, and to travel with the full number of retainers, cannons being fired on departure and arrival. On the other hand the Anglican Bishops, meeting in Conference in Shanghai, refused upon principle to accept such a distinction, believing it to be prejudicial to the cause of true religion and hateful to the Chinese nation. In fact, a trustworthy traveller says that France makes ten times as much capital out of her religious material as England does by her commercial supremacy, and that Roman Catholics have become a veritable *imperium in imperio* in China, disregarding local laws and customs. Martyrdoms are her political harvest. For instance, France demanded £200,000 besides mining rights in Si-chuan as compensation for the death of a missionary, and such action has been called "the cynical use of the bodies of slaughtered missionaries as pawns in the great game of international intrigue." Again, the Chinese

specially detest lofty buildings erected by foreigners, which dominate their cities. A cathedral built at the junction of the Peiho and the Grand Canal at Tientsin was erected in 1865, destroyed in 1870, threatened in 1897, after having been rebuilt, and is now once more in ruins.

No building in China is so hated as the great fort-like cathedral at Canton. An intelligent Chinese said: "We Chinese say that cathedral must come down even if it need be one hundred years hence." On the other hand the British Government has issued a circular to English missionaries pointing out that "Chinese prejudice and superstition must be more carefully considered in the forms and heights of the buildings erected."

In the face of such a policy the question of the relation of the English Government to English missionaries in China is full of difficulty.

Nowhere is more wisdom needed by the missionary, and outrages may occur through no fault of our people. Bishop Welldon, in discussing the future and realising the dangers, points out the necessity of a strong controlling force over missionaries in China, exercised by a powerful head of a Mission, and the need for a very wise head. It must be confessed, too, that the Christian statesman is worthy of our profound sympathy in this tangle of conflicting policies in the heart of a proud nation. He deserves the wise service of every English missionary, and the help of our best ecclesiastics. And, indeed, the instructions given by great Societies to their agents are excellent—to conform in every way to the customs of the people, not to invoke the aid of the foreign Powers, to obey the local authority, to follow the traditions of the people in buying land and erecting buildings, to suffer loss rather than disobey Chinese laws, and to ask for no compensation in case of injury. We look for a better day when noble aims in the spirit of Christ have established themselves in the heart of the Chinese people.

A brief reference is all that is needed in regard to Africa and Oceania. In 1888, in Nyassaland, which then

lay outside British influence, the Prime Minister was appealed to by some persons to avenge outrages on missionaries. Lord Salisbury answered, "The Government will make no attempt to support the commercial and religious efforts of missionaries there; it is not our duty to do it. . . . We must leave the dispersal of this terrible army of wickedness to the gradual advance of civilisation and Christianity." We hold that he was right, and missionaries asked for no redress.

Sir Harry Johnson gives the following account of his policy in Uganda. I make no comment on it but offer it as one of the latest attempts to keep the peace from the civil ruler's point of view by a distinguished official: "The Government is no partisan in matters of religion. It has been found necessary in some districts in this country to define areas which shall be, or remain, under Mohammedan direction, and others governed by Christian chiefs, some Roman and some Anglican. Where Mohammedanism has not gained complete possession, the Government, without undue pressure, advises native chiefs to encourage the establishment of Christian schools and stations. Where there exist low heathen faiths, the Government does not see a reason for protecting them." And this able administrator asserts that the natives have not been spoilt by Christianity as some have alleged, but have gained in manliness and straightforwardness.

The Christian missionary can at least say that in these regions he has the hearty sympathy of the Government.

The same testimony can be borne throughout Oceania. In the scattered islands the British resident supports by his actions the steady growth of Christianity. In New Guinea this support may even be entitled ardent and ungrudging. This territory has been fortunate in possessing definitely Christian governors; and it is most striking to read the careful reports of Sir William MacGregor year after year to the Government, in which he chronicles with deep interest the progress of Missions, and supports them in such words as these: "The lapse of time has steadily

strengthened the conviction that Mission labour is of immense value and importance in the Possession. The example of the regular and upright life of the missionary is of itself an object lesson of great significance. The humanity they practise in regard to the sick, the moral force by which they exercise restraint, are softening and ameliorating influences that could not otherwise be supplied to the natives." This policy continues, and it must be a source of satisfaction to the Government, upon the other hand, that they deal in New Guinea with very wise leaders in the Mission cause.

There is only one spot where the English statesman still stands, in some degree, in the path of the missionary—I mean at Khartoum. Let us give our full sympathy to both sides. Let us even suggest that both are right in their policy. Let the missionary push his claim to the utmost to carry out Gordon's wish where Gordon died.

The fact is that Bibles are permitted to be sold in Khartoum, and a Mission hospital is opened. But nothing more is yet allowed, though missionaries have free access to lands southward and up the Nile. Perhaps the day will soon come when Edwardes' conduct at Peshawar will be permitted, and upon his lines when he said: "It is of course incumbent upon us to be prudent, to begin quietly with schools, and wait the proper time for preaching. Having done that I should fear nothing. We are much safer if we do our duty than if we neglect it."

Meanwhile, I repeat, it may be said with thankfulness, that there is but one spot to-day where the English Government puts any check whatever upon the missionary, and even there it is desirous to withdraw all opposition.

Surveying the whole world so far as it is under English rule we may fairly claim with gratitude to God that the Civil Power and the missionary fervour are indeed parallel forces—not antagonistic—making for one common end—not by the sword, but by the influence of the still small voice. Thus, indeed, it has been appointed that God's

name shall be hallowed and His will at length be done throughout the world through the Pentecostal gift.

I conclude with the wise words of a Bishop of Calcutta : " That the Government should sympathise with Christian Missions, that Christian Missions should cooperate with the Government, are the principles for which I contend. It is true that the lines of the State and of the Church must be distinct ; but I think they may in some degree be parallel. For after all, if the Empire means Christian civilisation, it must mean also Christianity ; and they who are concerned in the diffusion of Christianity may at times be precipitate or inconsiderate, and if so, they deserve rebuke, or caution, or opposition : but the work which they do is in itself a noble service to the stability and dignity of the Empire."

The following documents have been used among others :—

Mr. Eugene Stock's writings, especially an article in the *Indian Church Quarterly* for April, 1901, reprinted in *C.M.S. Intelligencer*, July, 1901, entitled "Missions and the Government."

Lord Salisbury's Speech at the S.P.G. Bicentenary in London in June, 1900, to be found in S.P.G. and C.M.S. Magazines.

"China in Convulsion," by Dr. A. H. Smith.

"Missionary Methods," by Dr. Cust.

Bishop Welldon's article entitled "The State and Christian Missions," in the *Empire Review* in September, 1901.

"Missions in India in Relation to the Government," a paper by Sir William Mackworth Young in the *C.M.S. Intelligencer*, February, 1885.

Blue Books relating to China, Turkey, and New Guinea.

APPENDIX.

INSTRUCTIONS RELATING TO THE CONDUCT OF
MISSIONARIES.

From the S.P.G. "Instructions," 1706.

"That Missionaries take special care to give no offence to the Civil Government by intermeddling in affairs not relating to their own calling and function."

C.M.S. Regulations. Quoted from the "Memoir" of the Rev. Henry Venn, p. 448.

"Every Missionary is strictly charged to abstain from interfering in the political affairs of the country or place in which he may be situated."

Instructions given on a special occasion many years ago.

"The Committee affectionately but earnestly warn each Missionary, especially every young Missionary, not to take up supposed grievances too hastily, but to wait and consult with other Christian men till they have ascertained the reality and importance of any alleged social or civil wrong.

"Remember that these 'mixed' questions form the exceptions to the general rule of strict abstinence from interfering in political affairs.

"When however the Missionary is unavoidably involved, in the line of his duty, in questions having a political aspect, let him guard against a political spirit.

"In conformity with this rule the Missionary should never assume a position of hostility to the ruling powers, or have recourse to public censure or the lash of newspaper invectives. Let him rather address the authorities in respectful and confiding terms.

"If such addresses be unheeded, let a temperate statement of the case be transmitted to the Missionary Directors at home.

“ You must exhibit in your own conduct, as well as inculcate upon others, the spirit of the apostolic injunction, ‘ Tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour.’ ”

“ Let peace be the message of the Christian Missionary—peace, peace, peace—peace spiritual, peace social, peace political.

“ If a Missionary be not allowed to maintain this neutral position, it is a question whether he should not retire from that place.”

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN BY OTHER MISSIONARY SOCIETIES.

“ Too great caution cannot be exercised by all Missionaries, residing or journeying inland, to avoid difficulties and complications with the people, and especially with the Authorities. All the agents of the Mission must fully understand that they go out depending for help and protection on the living God, and not relying on the Arm of the Flesh. While availing themselves of any *privileges* offered by the British or Chinese Governments, they must make no *claim* for their help or protection. Appeals to Consuls to procure the punishment of offenders, or to demand the vindication of real or supposed rights or indemnification for losses, are to be avoided. Should trouble or persecution arise inland, a *friendly representation* may be made to the local Chinese officials, failing redress from whom those suffering must be satisfied to leave their case in God's hands. *Under no circumstances must any Missionary on his own responsibility make any appeal to the British Authorities.* As a last resource the injunction of the Master can be followed : ‘ If they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.’ ”

“ Those engaged in the Lord's work must be prepared to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and to ‘ rejoice they are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.’ Let them be imbued with the same spirit as Ezra. (Ez. viii. 21-3).

“ In preaching and selling books, the collection of large crowds in busy thoroughfares should as far as possible be avoided, and, where it can be done, any difficulty should be arranged without reference to the local authorities. The carrying about and display of unnecessary property is also to be deprecated, it may lead to robbery and loss, in which case no

demand for restitution should be made. As little intercourse with local authorities as possible should be attempted, and if their help on any occasion become necessary, it should be asked as a favour, and never demanded as a right. On no account should threatening language be used, or the threat of appealing to the Consul be made. Great respect must be shown towards all in authority, and must also be manifested in speaking of them, as is required by the Word of God.

“Where prolonged stay in a city is likely to cause trouble, it is better to journey onward; and where residence cannot be peaceably and safely effected, to retire and give up, or defer the attempt. God will open more doors than we can enter and occupy. And in conclusion, the weapons of our warfare must be *practically* recognised as Spiritual and not carnal.”

“I discourage our Missionaries from holding property in China outside the Treaty-Ports, and then only the houses they occupy. When Natives were willing to make over places, and even family-Temples, to the Mission, I always urged them to leave such properties in Native hands. In all our Missions we try to avoid all reference to the British Authorities; they hamper more than they aid.

“There are peculiar difficulties in one Province, owing to the Policy and conduct of the Romanists; their constant reliance on the Civil Power, and frequent unhappy use of it, have the tendency to embitter the Heathen population, and also to encourage injustice and a singular kind of arrogant *terrorism among those who become Christians*.

“I am persuaded that official remonstrances do not help in the long run. Patience is our strength, when we are in the right. During the whole course of the Mission’s History our Agents have made their way, and found safety and acceptance among savage tribes, quite independently of any aid from gunboats, or otherwise from Government. The power which they exercise is that of kindness, and an evident desire to deal justly, and to benefit them. Their response has almost always been one of confidence and friendly bearing, the healthful product of kindness, and not of fear of a gunboat in the background. Treaty-rights invoke Treaty-wrongs, to the injury of the people and the hindrance, in the most fatal manner, of Missionary effort.”

THE ACTION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

(Instructions by Lord Rosebery, 1893.)

“ The proceedings of Missionaries may involve the responsibility, and demand the support of Her Majesty’s Government. When it is considered what that intervention implies, and to what it may lead, it cannot be supposed that Her Majesty’s Government should permit the action that produces it to be wholly uncontrolled.

“ In no case indeed could interests so vast and far-reaching be entrusted to private individuals, however conscientious and high-minded.

“ Lord Rosebery wishes it, therefore, to be clearly understood that it is with Her Majesty’s Government and their officers that the decision must rest how far it is right and expedient to insist on British Missionaries being permitted to visit or reside in districts where the population are found to be unruly or hostile.”











